

Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Commissioner's Entry Plan

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Purpose and Context

- The purpose of this plan is to establish goals and activities to guide the Commissioner of Education's work during her transition, entry and planning phases.
- This entry period is a critical time to listen and learn from all Rhode Islanders as our state transitions from a well-respected Commissioner of Education who has served for nearly 18 years.
- In addition, significant change in the country's education landscape—including funding and requirements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the development of common state standards—sets a new context for the role of the state in educational improvement.



Pace and Tone

- The Commissioner of Education's action in the initial days will set the pace and the tone for many years to come.
- The Commissioner comes to Rhode Island with a mission, shared by the Board of Regents, to dramatically increase student achievement and close achievement gaps.
- In the days ahead, the Commissioner will impart a sense of urgency, travel the state to listen and learn, and develop and promote a coherent vision and strategy for moving forward.
- All goals and activities will be based in the belief that nothing is more important to student achievement than the quality of educators in the state and that we must support and develop our educators and retain and recruit the very best.



Process

- As plans are developed, we will build on the work to date, learning from what has worked and not worked to improve student achievement.
- Rhode Island has made progress in improving its education system, yet it is widely recognized that our students can do better and that we must address Rhode Island's achievement gaps.
- Therefore, the Commissioner will work with those who know our students best—parents, educators and the students themselves—to review where we are and plan a better future.



Entry Activities

Learn

Analyze and study NECAP and NAEP performance data and other student achievement data. Read and review existing state policies and implementation. Receive issue and policy briefings from Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) employees and education organizations.

Listen

Spend time with students, educators, parents, school district administrators, community members, school committees, state and local leaders, and employees at RIDE to hear about their proudest accomplishments and greatest challenges.

Share

Become known in the community by sharing her leadership story and communicating her educational and management philosophies. Establish a positive tone and an urgent pace and impart the belief that all children can achieve.

Build

Establish strong working relationships and build rapport with the Board of Regents, school committees, school district administrators, union leaders, RIDE employees, and state and local leaders including elected officials.

Plan

Prepare a strategic plan with specific action steps to guide the work of the Board of Regents and RIDE to assist in the preparation of the 2011 budget, Race to the Top proposal and legislative agenda.



Phases of the Entry Plan



The Entry Plan, which occurs concurrently with the ongoing work at RIDE, has three phases:

- Phase One: Transition  April 1-June 30
- Phase Two: Entry  July 1-August 15
- Phase Three: Planning  August 16-October 15

(specific dates are approximate)

Phase One



The transition phase is largely about understanding the existing policies and programs and building relationships with the internal team including the Board of Regents and the employees at RIDE.

- **Goal One** – *Understand achievement data for Rhode Island students including achievement gaps.*
- **Goal Two** – *Create a positive and effective governance team.*
- **Goal Three** – *Build upon the accomplishments and ongoing work of each office and address challenges within the RIDE.*
- **Goal Four** – *Establish a supportive, positive and effective working relationship with key state and local leaders.*
- **Goal Five** – *Understand the best ways to engage those closest to our students—parents, educators and students themselves.*
- **Goal Six** – *Develop message points for the Commissioner, Board of Regents and RIDE employees and prepare to communicate the points to the public.*

Goal One

Phase One:
Transition

Understand achievement data for Rhode Island students including achievement gaps.

- ✓ Review performance of schools and school districts across the state.
 - ✓ Analyze state-wide data for trends and compare to existing policies and programs.
 - ✓ Evaluate the conditions of chronically underperforming schools and school districts in order to determine the course of action.
 - ✓ Use data to identify best practice schools and school districts particularly those that are effectively raising achievement for all students while also closing achievement gaps.
- ✓ ***indicates completion of task***



Goal Two

Phase One:
Transition

Create a positive and effective governance team.

- ✓ Communicate regularly with Judge Flanders, Chairperson for the Board of Regents.
- ✓ Meet regularly with the Board of Regents' transition team to manage the process of the Commissioner's transition and to communicate to the full board.
- ✓ Conduct a minimum of two individual meetings with each Regent to understand their personal vision for the work and to build a relationship.
- ✓ Conduct two retreats for the Board of Regents.
- ✓ Establish standards of practice between the Board of Regents and the Commissioner.
- ✓ Develop ongoing communication protocols for the Board of Regents and the Commissioner.
- ✓ Determine Board of Regents' priorities.



Goal Three

Phase One:
Transition

Build upon the accomplishments and ongoing work of each office and address challenges within RIDE.

- ✓ Receive briefings on the existing policy agenda and programs of each office.
- ✓ Conduct a minimum of two individual meetings with each director.
- ✓ Meet with full team from each office.
- ✓ Meet with the union leadership of both of the unions representing the RIDE employees.
- ✓ Set a tone with the RIDE team that reflects the Commissioner's expectation of action, execution and measurement of results.
- ✓ Host "office hours" for individual members of the RIDE team or small groups to visit with the Commissioner.

Goal Four

Phase One:
Transition

Establish a supportive, positive and effective working relationship with key state and local leaders.

- ✓ Conduct introductory meetings with the Rhode Island Congressional delegation, Governor Carcieri, other General Officers, the leadership of the General Assembly and municipal leaders.
- ✓ Host an introductory meeting for Rhode Island educational leaders.
- ✓ Meet with the Commissioner of the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, college and university presidents and other leaders.
- ✓ Reach out to the directors of other state agencies including the Department of Labor and Training, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, and the Department of Health and Human Services.



Goal Five

Phase One:
Transition

Understand the best ways to engage those closest to our students—parents, educators and students themselves.

- ✓ Identify the organizations and associations representing and serving parents, educators and students.
- ✓ Determine how the Board of Regents and RIDE engaged parents, educators and students in the past and what worked and what could be improved about that engagement.
- ✓ Conduct introductory outreach to the organizations and associations representing parents, educators and students and develop plans for ongoing communication and collaboration.



Goal Six

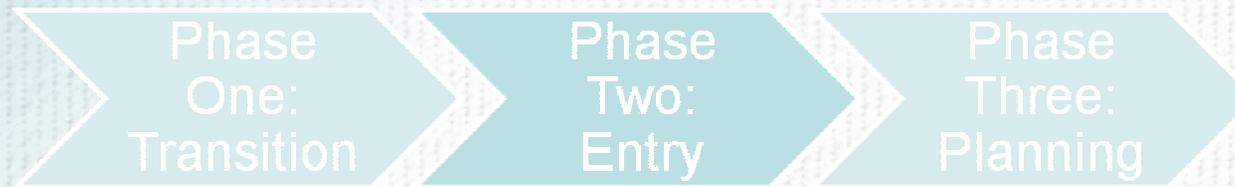
Phase One:
Transition

Develop message points for the Commissioner, Board of Regents and RIDE employees and prepare to communicate the points to the public.

- ✓ Work with Board of Regents and RIDE employees to develop a set of message points to use consistently as the broader outreach begins.
- ✓ Distribute message points and develop shared agreement to be consistent with the message.
- ✓ Meet with key members of the media as an introduction and to begin to build relationships.



Phase Two



Starting on the first official day, the Commissioner of Education will focus externally across the state to hear the voices of the people of Rhode Island from students and parents to school and community leaders about their success stories, their greatest challenges and their aspirations for Rhode Island students.

- **Goal One** – *Generate excitement and set a positive tone by having a high impact first day for the Commissioner of Education.*
- **Goal Two** – *Understand the needs of the state by seeing programs first-hand and listening to community members from across Rhode Island.*
- **Goal Three** - *Build a strong working relationship with Rhode Island superintendents and school committee members.*
- **Goal Four** – *Listen to the needs and understand the priorities of Rhode Island leaders and representatives of key organizations and establish positive working relationships.*
- **Goal Five** – *Reach out specifically to those who know our students best— parents, educators and students themselves.*

Goal One

Phase
Two:
Entry

Generate excitement and set a positive tone by having a high impact first day for the Commissioner of Education.

- Work with RIDE employees to set an agenda for day one that includes school visits with students of varying ages and a range of educational programs.
- Engage the Board of Regents in the planning of the first day and in the day's events.
- Ensure that local leaders and key state leaders are aware of the agenda and invited to join the Commissioner.
- Reach out to the media to join the visit so that the message of a new beginning is shared broadly in the community and the state.



Goal Two

Phase
Two:
Entry

Understand the needs of the state by seeing programs first-hand and listening to community members from across Rhode Island.

- Visit an assortment of programs throughout the state to listen to the community members and education professionals to understand their experiences and identify themes.
- Share the message points broadly across the state and provide talking points to Board of Regents for additional outreach.
- Visit summer programs for students at every age from early childhood to secondary.
- Drop in on professional development sessions for teachers including those conducted by institutions of higher education.
- Visit adult education programs.
- Plan for the August Board of Regents regular meeting to be held out in the community.

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Goal Three

Phase
Two:
Entry

Build a strong working relationship with Rhode Island superintendents and school committee members.

- Meet individually and in groups with superintendents and school committee members to identify needs, priorities, and strategies for increasing student achievement.
- Attend superintendent association and school committee association meetings and events to identify issues and priorities affecting districts.
- Seek direct feedback from superintendents and school committee members on how the Board of Regents and RIDE can improve its work with districts.
- Work with district leaders to identify innovations and models for seeking "Race to the Top" funding and other funding opportunities.
- Host "office hours" for superintendents and school committees.

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Goal Four

Phase
Two:
Entry

Listen to the needs and understand the priorities of Rhode Island leaders and representatives of key organizations and establish positive working relationships.

- Meet individually with leaders of the education community including the groups invited to the introductory meeting during the transition phase.
- Host coffee meetings with key state representatives and senators as well as local leaders.
- Meet with leaders of key organizations in the state including but not limited to community based organizations, civil rights organizations, philanthropic foundations, child service organizations, educational support and advocacy groups and community foundations.
- In collaboration with higher education partners convene a series of issue-based discussions of local and national best practices for increasing student achievement.
- Meet with leaders of the business community.

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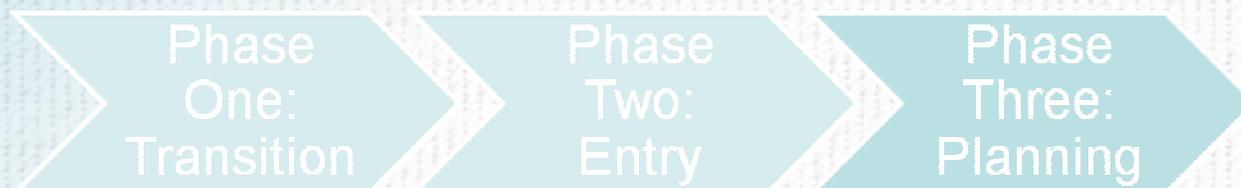
Goal Five

Phase
Two:
Entry

Reach out specifically to those who know our students best—parents, educators and students themselves.

- Meet individually with leaders of the organizations identified in Phase One including Young Voices, Youth in Action, College Visions, AS220, the Rhode Island Parent Teacher Association and the Rhode Island Parent Information Network.
- Host coffee hours, living room chats and similar informal gatherings with groups of parents, educators and students.
- Host “office hours” for individuals or groups of parents, educators and students.

Phase Three



Using information gathered during the first two phases, the Commissioner will lead the Board of Regents and RIDE employees in the development of a strategic plan with specific and measurable action steps. A draft of this plan will be shared broadly so that feedback can be provided and incorporated into the plan.

- **Goal One** – *Develop draft of a strategic plan for increasing student achievement in the state of Rhode Island.*
- **Goal Two** – *Share the message points throughout the state and present the draft strategic plan for feedback.*
- **Goal Three** – *Distribute the strategic plan for increasing student achievement in the state of Rhode Island.*

Goal One

Phase
Three:
Planning

Develop draft of a strategic plan for increasing student achievement in the state of Rhode Island.

- Host a planning session for the Board of Regents.
- Conduct planning sessions for the RIDE senior team and the entire RIDE staff.
- Use information obtained from superintendents, school boards, educational leaders and community leaders to inform strategic plan.
- Create a theory of action for RIDE that illustrates how the policy priorities and programs of the state will result in increased student achievement.
- Develop a plan that can stand alone but also incorporates a design for “Race to the Top” funding.
- Use the strategic plan to prepare for 2011 budget submission and 2010 General Assembly legislative session.

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Goal Two

Phase
Three:
Planning

Share the message points throughout the state and present the draft strategic plan for feedback.

- Visit every school district in the state to meet with education and parent leaders and include their state government leadership as well as the local media representatives.
- Share the draft strategic plan broadly and collect feedback and respond to questions.
- Work with regional collaboratives and other convening groups to host listening sessions to receive feedback on the strategic plan.
- Celebrate the first day of school in various school districts including possibly riding the bus or walking to school with the local superintendent.
- Share and receive feedback on the strategic plan with national education experts.



Goal Three

Phase
Three:
Planning

Distribute the strategic plan for increasing student achievement in the state of Rhode Island.

- Revise strategic plan using feedback received.
- Host an event with the Board of Regents to present the strategic plan.
- Plan the September Board of Regents' meeting out in the community.
- Develop a legislative agenda based on the strategic plan.
- Submit a proposal for "Race to the Top" funding based on the strategic plan.
- Submit the 2011 budget based on the fiscal needs of the strategic plan.

